

# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

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## DOC cites progress containing COVID-19 in state correctional system

**Dover, DE** – As Delaware passes the 12 week mark since the state's first COVID-19 diagnosis on March 11, the Delaware Department of Correction today issued a report that highlights its multi-pronged effort to contain the disease in the state's correctional system.

"Currently, more than 4,300 people are incarcerated in Delaware's 9 prisons and work release centers, and today there are just 2 COVID-positive inmates - both from the state's largest prison in Smyrna - who have symptoms of illness. Meanwhile, 137 inmates have fully recovered," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "Deliberate and sustained actions have helped mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in Delaware's correctional system. We will continue to aggressively screen, clean, monitor, test, isolate, trace, and treat to stay ahead of this invisible threat."

Read "[How the Delaware Department of Correction is containing COVID-19](#)" online [HERE](#).

While numerous correctional systems across the country have had hundreds, even thousands, of COVID-positive inmates, in the first 12 weeks, Delaware has had fewer than 150 inmate COVID-19 cases. Today's report outlines how the DOC is meeting the once-in-a-century public health and safety challenge COVID-19 presents to correctional systems. DOC efforts have included:

- Extensive **screening** of every person who enters a correctional facility and office and close monitoring of newly arriving inmates for 14 days;
- Use of **facemasks** by all correctional officers and distribution to more than half of all inmates;
- **Testing** of inmates and staff who exhibit signs of illness, including the use of **rapid COVID-19 tests**, and **proactive testing** of hundreds more inmates and staff who have no symptoms. Extensive contact tracing is employed when a positive test is received;
- **Isolation** of all suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases and round-the-clock treatment of inmates who develop symptoms of illness;
- Aggressive **cleaning**, including twice-daily cleanings of all facilities and more frequent cleaning of commonly-used surfaces, education and support for personal hygiene practices, and use of specialized fogging machines that disinfect entire rooms, and;
- Continued opportunities for inmates to **connect** with community support and participate in treatment programs and **learn** through virtual education amid the temporary suspension of in-person visitation and in-person programming.

DOC's continued COVID-19 response [comes amid a reduction of the state's incarcerated population. Since March 1, 2020 its Level V prison population has decreased more than 11%, its Level IV work release/violation of probation population has decreased by 37%, and its pre-trial detention population has dropped by a quarter. This reduction since COVID spread to the region this year accelerates a 25% decline in the incarcerated population](#) since 2013, driven by lower crime rates, implementation of a statewide bail reform initiative, and the Carney Administration's efforts to strengthen reentry services, which are helping to drive the state's recidivism rate lower.

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